St. VALENTINE REMEMBERED

By Gertrude Armstrong

FOR LOVE, CHARITIES

These were valentines . . .

. . . of the century's turn.

"Words may pass away and die,
"Every feeling die away,
"But the constant love I cherish,
"Never shall decay."

WHAT FLUTTERINGS this romantic verse must have caused in the heart of some bashful maiden many years ago, as she opened her Valentine! She naturally placed it in her album which still remains, folded and worn, to testify to her swain's declaration of love.

Another card in the same album shows a loving couple strolling down a shady lane, with a church standing significantly by, and in the background a couple of red satin hearts to attest to mutual love.

At first the lady's blushes are hidden by the wide brim of a sunbonnet, which lifts to disclose her demure face. The words:

"Oh, do you remember, love, that
happy time,
"When we wandered together in the
bright sunshine?
"I whispered my love and you shyly
smiled on it,
"Though your blushes were hid by
your pretty sunbonnet!"

St. Valentine is probably the best known saint in the church calendar, by name at least, on account of the widespread customs associated with his day. Wheatley writes of him, "He was so famous for his love and charity that the custom of choosing from thence valentines upon his festival, which is still widely practiced, took its use."

Although February 14 was a day of festival in olden times, long before the advent of Christianity, not many of those who now observe it know much about its origins as St. Valentine's Day, nor of the holy man after whom it was named. He was one of the early Christian priests who suffered martyrdom at the hands of the pagans in the third century. At that time, February 14 was a day of pagan festival and holiday known as a "Love Feast," and one of the activities was a kind of game in which the participants marked their names on shells to be placed in two containers, one for the women and one for the men. Each person drew out the name of a member of the opposite sex for a partner—from this arose the romantic tendencies of the day.

As time went on, the festival degenerated into one of license, and was frowned upon by the early church, so it was decided by its members to change the character of the day by giving it a different meaning, the congregation picking out the names of saints and sending greetings in their names to their friends and relatives. This was the origin of our modern Valentine's Day.

St. Valentine lived in Rome during the time of Emperor Claudius II and preached Christianity to all who would listen, gaining many followers. Annoyed by his popularity, Claudius sent for the priest. "Why dost thou not worship as do we?" he asked. "Why dost thou refuse to bow to the gods of the Romans?"

The Christian priest looked without fear upon the Emperor who had power to cast him to wild beasts in the arena, or burn him at the stake, but he was not afraid, and unflinchingly gave the reasons for his belief.

The Emperor listened in silence, amazed at the man's courage—it was the story of St. Paul and Agrippa repeated—"Almost thou persuadeth me to become a Christian," but he said nothing.

Then, turning to his guards, he ordered them to take the priest to the home of a judge called Asterius, for safe-keeping.

As his gaoler heard him praying one day, he asked St. Valentine to explain his faith, and when he had done so, said that he had a daughter who was blind, and if the priest could cure her affliction he would believe that what he preached was true. The holy man then placed his hands over the girl's eyes and immediately afterwards she could see. Asterius and his family were baptized. But neither they nor St. Valentine lived long afterwards, as the Emperor ordered them put to death. Many years later a church was built to St. Valentine's memory in Rome.

Many readers will remember Charles Lamb's essay on St. Valentine's Day and the references to it in "Pepys' Diary," where the writer indicates the day was universally observed. He mentions a valentine he purchased for a Mrs. Martha Batten, which, consisting of seven pairs of gloves, one embroidered and the others plain, cost him 40 shillings. At parties on this day they seemed to have picked partners by means of cards, and Pepys mentions one at which he spotted his own name on a card held by Mrs. The, which he ruefully mused would cost him 20/s and there would be more to be spent on a valentine for his wife. This, he says later, cost him £5. But always philosophical, he decided the money would have been spent on something anyway!

There is an interesting book on the subject by Lawrence Whistle, called "The English Festivals," in which many facts about the day come to light. Many of the old valentines were very elaborate and lavishly decorated with waxen wreaths and sprays of satin flowers, ovals and hearts of satin, filled with sachet powder, and bouquets of artificial flowers. Occasionally they bore bluebirds made of real feathers, and hearts pierced by golden arrows. These cards were produced by firms devoted entirely to their production, in a flourishing trade. This sentimental type of card was gradually replaced by the comic ones of today. Many valentines of our grandmothers' days were based on puns, which although they seem pretty feeble to us now, were quite the rage for a time, and considered the last word in wit. One of these unearthed recently bears a mock marriage certificate, the parson with the name of Rev. Fee-um, and the witnesses, I Lovall and B. Happy! These old cards, silly as they seem, cannot fail to produce a certain feeling of nostalgia for the days when life was less complex and unophisticated, and when more simple pleasures pleased.

In early Victorian days the more expensive valentines were made by hand, but this practice was soon replaced by mass production.

At one time children used to go from house to house, as they do here on Halloween, chanting a little jingle for a "handout":

"Knock the kettle against the pan,
"Give a penny if you can.
"We be ragged and you be fine,
"Please to give us a valentine.
"Up with the kettle and down with
the spout,
"Give a penny and we'll get out."

In between the First and Second World Wars, Valentines came into vogue again, then dropped out of fashion until recent years. Now every stationery and candy store displays vast quantities of cards and suitably wrapped gifts for the occasion. Like Mother's Day, St. Valentine's has become thoroughly commercialized, but just the same we all enjoy it as they did in Elizabethan times.

"Tomorrow is St. Valentine's Day,
"All in the morning betime
"And I a maid at thy window
"To be thy Valentine."—Hamlet.

If You Mulch with Sawdust

NITROGEN NECESSARY

It is important for everyone to realize that the changes or reactions that take place in soil are often slow. For example, under normal tillage conditions it may take 10 to 20 years for the organic matter content of a soil to either build-up or decline.

It should not be alarming when certain cultural practices that one may employ from time to time do not produce startling results. Often a slight yearly improvement in some factor will, with time, become important. It is for these reasons that experiments in soil fertility research such as the one reported are usually carried on for several years.

An experiment was started in 1946 on the Saanichton Experimental Farm to study the effects of fertility treatments on the growth and yield of boysenberries.

Treatment A plots were in sod in 1948 and 1949 and straw was incorporated from 1950 to 1954 at 3.75 tons per acre per year.

Treatment B plots were kept clean cultivated. Treatment C plots were mulched with three inches of sawdust, and Treatment D plots received hay as a mulch at 7.5 tons per acre per year.

In 1955 the boysenberries were removed, the materials incorporated and the area planted to an indicator crop to study the residual effects. The sawdust incorporated treatment plus additional nitrogen produced the highest yields and the clean cultivated treatment the lowest. Also, soil in the clean cultivated plots had the lowest organic matter content. The data supported the present recommendation that additional nitgrogen must be applied when sawdust is incorporated into the soil. The data demonstrated that the fertility treatments had a residual effect on yield and soil organic matter. However, the effects were small considering the previous treatments.